

MEMOIRS OF LITERATURE.

MONDAY, May 3. 1714.

I.

L'ILIADÉ. Poème. Avec un Discours sur HOMÈRE. Par Monsieur DE LA MOTTE, de l'Académie Française. A Paris, chez Gregoire Dupuis, rue S. Jacques, à la Fontaine d'Or. MDCCXIV.

That is, *THE ILIAS*. A Poem. With a Discourse upon HOMER, shewing the Beauties and Imperfections of that Celebrated Poet. By Mr. DE LA MOTTE, of the French Academy. Paris. MDCCXIV. In 8vo. pagg. 180. for the Discourse, and 207. for the Poem. Sold by P. Dunoyer, at the Erasmus's Head in the Strand.

MADAM Dacier, and Mr. de la Motte, have very different Notions about the Merit of Homer. That Illustrious Lady undertook to shew the Excellency of that Poet, and bestowed the greatest Encomium upon him, in a Preface to her French Translation of the *Ilias*, of which I have given an Account in the First Volume of these *Memoirs*. Mr. de la Motte, being of Opinion that Homer is not a perfect

Model of *Epic Poetry*, has published a Discourse, which seems to be an indirect Confutation of Madam Dacier's Preface. That Discourse, and the Poem that follows it, have occasioned a great Uproar among the Men of Letters at Paris, and raised the Indignation of Mr. Dacier, and the other Admirers of the Ancients. Mr. de la Motte, say they, does not understand Greek; and therefore he cannot be a competent Judge of the Works of Homer. In Answer to that Objection, those who side with Mr. de la Motte, and whose Number is very considerable, say that he does not pretend to examine the Greek *Ilias*, but only the French Translation of that Poem by Madam Dacier; and that he defies his Adversaries to shew, that his Criticisms upon Homer are not just and true.

The Discourse, which makes the Subject of this Article, is a Dissertation, or rather an Essay upon the Art of Poetry, wherein Mr. de la Motte does freely give his Opinion about the *Ilias*, and its Author.

Mr. de la Motte having mentioned, on the one side, what has been said by the Admirers of Homer to the Glory of that Poet; and on the other, what has been objected against him by those who despise him, does not approve the great Admiration of the former, nor the great Contempt of the latter. He thinks it necessary to examine the several Parts of the *Ilias* with Impartiality, in order to give a right Judgment about that Poem; and he declares, that he proposes his Sentiments

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only as Conjectures, with a due Respect for those who are of a different Opinion, being always ready to be better informed. Nay, he is willing to forgive injurious Words, if any one can undeceive him at that rate.

After these Observations, Mr. de la Motte treats of *Homer's Design* in his *Iliad*. The Learned are not agreed about it. Some believe, that the Poet undertook to please his Readers with an Ingenious and entertaining Description of the War of *Troy*. Others, that he only intended to raise in their Minds a great Admiration for the surprising Valour of his Hero. Others, that he had only Manners in his View; and that by a very simple Fable, though vast on Account of its Ornaments, he designed to make the *Gracians* sensible, how a good Understanding among the Princes, who governed them, was absolutely necessary for their Welfare and Happiness.

Our Author mentions the Reasons alledged for those Three Opinions, and rejects them. He believes, that the first Design of *Homer* was to sing the Anger of *Achilles* his Hero, as being a proper Subject to raise the Attention and Admiration of the Readers; and that in order to please the *Gracians* more effectually, he adorned that Subject with every thing that might be entertaining to them, with a Description of their Country and Usages, and with the History of their Kings, and of their Gods. I am the more unwilling, says Mr. de la Motte, to look for any other Mystery in the *Iliad*, because those who know the true Design of that Poem, have no great Advantage over those who know nothing of it.

And yet, continues the Author, so great a Stress is laid by some Learned Men upon the Importance of those Discoveries, that they make every thing, which they find in *Homer*, an inviolable Rule. They unmercifully refuse to call a Poem an *Epic Poem*, unless it be like the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*. The Action, say they, ought to be feigned, and great; it must be transacted among Kings, confined to a certain Space of Time, and attended with the Ministry of the Gods; nay, the Narration it self ought to have a certain Extent. Why so? Because, say they, 'tis the Nature of the *Epic Poem*. But how do they prove, that it is its Nature? Because all those Qualifications are to be

found in a Poem of *Homer*, which has had a good Success, and, what is more considerable still, has been approved by *Aristotle* and *Horace*.

Mr. de la Motte has a different Notion of the *Epic Poem*. Nothing appears to him absolutely essential to that Poem, but the Account of an Action. Whether the Action be great, pathetick, or only agreeable; whether it be transacted among Kings, or Persons less distinguished; whether the Poet be profuse of the Wonderful, or contented with natural Causes; those Differences will indeed make new Species, but will not change the Nature of the Poem.

Our Author goes farther still, and does not think it necessary to confine the Poem to the Account of an Action. Perhaps, says he, the whole Life of a Hero, artfully managed, and adorned with Poetical Beauties, would be a proper Subject for an *Epic Poem*. Thus he looks upon the Choice of the Matter, and even of the Form, as an arbitrary thing. But, says he, whatever the Choice may be, the Poet ought to please the Reader. He must either raise his Attention by the Importance of the Events, or move his Heart with the Passions of the Actors, or only amuse him with the Variety and Graces of the Subject. A Poem, which affords all those Advantages, and pleases in order to instruct, would doubtless deserve the Preference; and yet the Oeconomy of such a Poem should not be proposed as an inviolable Rule, because perhaps the same End might be attained some other way.

The Author proceeds to the *Art of Homer*, and says that he made it his Business to raise the Attention of his Readers, to move, and to surprize them.

In order to excite their Attention, he pitched upon the greatest Event, that might affect them: All the *Gracians* in Arms cross the Sea, to destroy a flourishing Kingdom.

To move the Readers, he has interspersed through his Work the most affecting Sentiments, and the most lively Passions. Not contented to relate those Passions, he presents them, as it were, to the Eye, that he may give a greater Life to his Poem. He generally introduces his Actors speaking: The Dramatick prevails all along in the *Iliad*; and such is the Charm of it, that sometimes it adorns the Poem, even when it is a Fault.

Homer was fully sensible, that there is a great Difference between relating the Sense of a Discourse, and inserting the Discourse it self. The Poet would lessen the Sentiments of his Actors by a bare Narration: All the great Strokes, all the Vehemence would vanish away. Whereas if I hear the Actor himself, and receive the Passion, as it were, from the first hand, I am immediately affected with it, I share it with him; the Apostrophes and other Figures work upon me; instead of a Reader, I become a Witness; I forget the Poet, and mind only the Actor.

Lastly, in order to surprise, *Homer* made use of the Wonderful. The whole Heaven is concerned in his Action: There are *Greek* and *Trojan* Gods, like so many Chiefs, whom the Poet distributes to each Party. Thus, Prodigies are not spared, Blood-rains, sudden Inundations, Speaking Horses, Tripods going of themselves to the Assemblies of the Gods, Gold Statues that move and think. *Homer* is very free of all those things; and though his Age was never so greedy of Fables and Miracles, he must needs have had full Satisfaction.

That Poet being contented to occasion this sort of Surprise, neglected another, which requires a much greater Skill, and appears a great deal more important. He should have prepared the Events, without making his Readers foresee them; and he should have done it in such a manner, that when they happen, the Reader may be surprised without being offended, and feel, according to the Nature of the Event, a great Joy, or a great Grief, not lessened by Foresight.

Homer, far from observing this Art, seems to have avoided it designedly. Not contented to prepare the Events, he gives full Notice of them, even more than once. When he brings in the Two Armies fighting, the Reader knows before hand which of them will get the Victory. When Two Heroes are engaged, the Reader knows who is to die, and who will come off victorious. *Jupiter* himself, in the Middle of the Poem, to make a Shew of his Power and Foreknowledge, gives the Gods an exact Account of the remaining Part of the Action; so that the Reader is tempted to go no farther, and can hardly resolve to enter into a Detail, which becomes indifferent, as soon as the essential Points of it are known.

Homer did not sufficiently consult the Nature of Man upon this Occasion. There is only a certain Measure of Sensibility in the Human Heart: The Foresight of Events exhausts it by Degrees, so that when they come to pass, they make an Impression more or less faint, as they have been more or less foreseen. Therefore a Poet, who designs to move the Reader, ought carefully to preserve all the Impression, which the Events are able to produce; and keep up in him an agreeable Uneasiness about the Fate of those Persons for whom he is concerned, and a lively Desire of knowing the remaining Part of the Adventures; instead of blunting his Sensibility by foretelling what will happen.

The Nature of Man ought likewise to be consulted, in order to prescribe the true Bounds of the Probable and Wonderful. A Man is only moved with what he believes; and therefore a Poet ought to propose nothing to him, but what he can believe, and has at least an Appearance of Truth. A Man admires only those things, which appear to him extraordinary; and therefore a Poet ought to set nothing before his Eyes, but what is out of the common Course of Nature. And that he may reconcile those Two Principles, which seem to be so opposite, he ought to bestow upon the Wonderful the Colours of Truth, by such probable Preparations, that those very Prodigies with which he designs to affect the Mind, may seem to be the natural Consequences of them.

Such is the way of uniting the Probable and the Wonderful together: But (continues *Mr. de la Motte*) the Application of that Principle is very arbitrary. The Manners and Opinions of Nations are different; and those Manners and Opinions produce a Wonderful peculiar to each Nation, and different Probabilities. Thus a Poem might be excellent in a Country, and a very sorry one elsewhere, because things, accounted great in that Country, would be looked upon as mean in another.

I leave it to the Readers to judge, whether this last Reflection of *Mr. de la Motte* will not go a great way to justify many Passages in *Homer's Iliad*.

Our Author proceeds to the Gods of *Homer*. He describes their Misery, their Vices and Imperfections, and affirms, that the Poet is inexcusable for bringing in such con-

temptible Deities. Some pretend to vindicate *Homer*, by saying that the Multitude of Gods, who appear in the *Ilias*, is not at all inconsistent with the Unity of a Supreme Being; that they are only different Attributes of that Being; and that the Poet transformed them into Persons for no other Reason, but to explain the Divine Operations in a Manner suited to the Human Imagination. If this Principle be true, says Mr. de la Motte, how comes it to be insignificant in the Application? Can any one reconcile with that Notion the Hatred of *Juno* against *Jupiter*, the brutish Way of *Jupiter's* being revenged of *Juno*, the Injustice with which the wisest of the Gods upbraid *Jupiter* himself, in a word, their frequent Tumults and Seditions? At this rate, we continually see in the *Ilias* the Attributes revolted against their common Essence; and the Passions of Man do not produce a greater Disorder in his Mind, than the Divine Qualities in the Soul of *Jupiter*. The Author takes notice of another way of vindicating *Homer* upon this Head, and complains, that some go so far as to draw a scandalous Parallel between the Sacred Writings, and the Imaginations of that Poet.

Mr. de la Motte having asked one Day the late Mr. Despreaux, how the Oddness and Undecency of the Gods of *Homer* could be accounted for, the latter told him, as a Secret, that he believed the Poet was afraid of tiring his Readers with a long Series of Tragical Actions; that having nothing to describe on the Part of Men but dismal Fights and Passions, he resolved to enliven his Subject at the Cost of the Gods themselves, and brought them in acting a comical Part in the Interludes of his Action, to divert the Reader, who might have grown weary of so many Engagements, had it not been for those Intermedes.

The Author takes Occasion from thence to make the following Observation. Men, says he, generally form two Sorts of Judgment about ingenious Works; the one publick, & the other private; the one for Shew & Ceremony, and the other for their own Use. When they examine an Author in their Closet, they do it freely, without minding what others think of him; and are sometimes the more fond of the Notion which they have of that Author, because it is more singular, and, as it were, more their own. But when they

are to give a publick Judgment about the same Author, they endeavour to come nearer the common Notion, though it appears to them false, and grow basely circumspect. There are, continues the Author, many Persons of that Character; and I could name several, who believe as I do, and yet for Want of Courage, they will perhaps join with my Adversaries.

Mr. de la Motte blames *Homer* for representing his Heroes Vain, Angry, Impious, Cruel, and makes several Observations upon their Characters.

In the next place, he examines the Narration of the Poet. *Homer*, says he, should have affected the Readers with the Gracefulness of his Narration: It should have been concise and ingenious, whereas it is frequently diffuse and insipid. He might have imagined such Circumstances, as were suitable to the principal Fact, which he was to relate: Why then does he pitch upon mean ones, when they should be Great and Noble? How come they to be disagreeable, when they should be graceful? Slow, when the Subject requires Vivacity?

When *Thetis* brings to her Son the Arms forged by *Vulcan*, and urges him to reconcile himself with *Agamemnon*; *Homer* adds to those great things, that *Thetis* was very careful to drive away the Flies from *Patroclus's* Body. Some call this an Allegory: Let it be so; but the Meanness of the Image affects much more, than the Justness of the Allegory.

Juno, in another place, dresses her self to the best Advantage, in order to charm and surprise *Jupiter*. *Homer* is so particular as to say, in fine Words if you will, but however very clearly, that she got off the Dirt of her whole Body before she perfumed it. An Idea, which tarnishes a very graceful Image.

Neptune is impatient to assist the *Greeks*. *Homer* relates, that this God fetches his Chariot in a certain Place; and then that he comes to a Place nearer the Camp; that there, he unteams his Horses, and shuts them up himself, to find them upon his Return: A Detail, unbecoming the Majesty of the God, and inconsistent with his Impatience.

I shall not scruple to say, continues the Author, that *Homer* offends in all those Passages against the Principle, which ought to direct

direct a Poet in the Choice of Circumstances. He may imagine at Pleasure Facts proper to excite Admiration, Compassion, Joy, or any other Sentiment; but those Facts being once pitched upon, ought to be supported by suitable Circumstances. If it be a noble Fact, the Circumstances ought to be great and noble, and borrow Dignity one from another. If it be a Fact that causes a Concern, the Poet ought to mix nothing with it, but what may increase the Concern. Thus the Unity, which ought to prevail in the whole, ought also to prevail in each Part.

Here the Author takes notice of *Homer's Repetitions*: He is apt to think, that the Poet was not displeased to enlarge his Work with those things, which he had ready at hand; and maintains, that such Repetitions cannot be justified.

As for *Homer's Descriptions*, Mr. de la Motte acknowledges, that some of them are worthy of that Celebrated Poet; but he adds, that *Homer* is generally too particular, and spoils his Descriptions by too minute a Detail. If he describes a Shield, not contented to mention its Matter and Form, he gives an Account of all its Parts, and makes, as it were, an Inventory of them, which is sometimes the more tedious, as being attended with another Detail, importing, how that Shield came from hand to hand to the present Owner: Nor is this last Story without its particular Parentheses.

If he describes a Wound, he does it with an Anatomical Exactness, which cools the Imagination, and puts a Stop to the Reader's Concern about the remaining Part of a Fight.

If he describes the Travels of the Gods, he does it with a Heap of Circumstances, which make the Reader impatient. The Horses come out of the Stable; the Chariot is taken out of the House; the Horses are put to the Chariot; the God sets out; he rests in some Places, which the Poet does not fail to describe; the God goes on with his Journey, and arrives at last: But this is not all; the Return of the Deity is attended with as many Circumstances, as the Departure. A Poet, continues the Author, ought not to make such Descriptions. He ought to lay aside all indifferent Circumstances, and offer nothing but what is worthy of Curiosity and Attention.

The *Speeches* of the Actors in the *Ilias* appear to Mr. de la Motte, not only one of the most considerable Parts of that Poem, but also one of the richest and most beautiful. But he maintains, that many of those Speeches are wrongly inserted. They are, says he, improper and unseasonable between Two Enemies in the Heat of a Fight. How can Warriors, whose Interest it is to get a speedy Victory, lose time in giving their Enemies hard Words in the Middle of a Battel, and telling them Stories and Genealogies? How comes it, that one of the Combatants takes no Advantage of the Imprudence of the other? How comes it, that such long Harangues are not interrupted with Lances and Javelins? Can any one believe, that in an Engagement two Soldiers, improperly transformed into Orators, will make an End of their Discourses in such a quiet Manner?

Our Author censures also the Discourses, which the Heroes of *Homer* do sometimes address to the dead Bodies of those whom they have killed. But above all things, he cannot bear the Harangues of the same Heroes to their Horses. *Homer*, says he, makes no great Difference between Men and Horses. He endeavours to work upon those Animals by the same Motives, that prevail upon Men, such as Interest, Pleasure, Glory, and Virtue it self.

Among the proper Discourses to be found in the *Ilias*, Mr. de la Motte commends those of the Ambassadors of *Agamemnon* to *Achilles*, in order to allay his Anger, and bring him back to the Assistance of the *Greeks*. The Author's Observations upon those Speeches are no less judicious, than glorious to *Homer*. However, he believes they are interspersed with several Imperfections, and undertakes to shew it at large; but I cannot dwell upon this Head. I proceed to his Reflections upon the *Comparisons* scattered through the *Ilias*.

Comparisons, says he, are made use of in the Poem, either to give a more lively and more distinct Idea of an Object, by exact Similitudes; or to raise and enliven the Mind by noble and agreeable Images; or only to keep up and vary the Narration, which would be too dry and too uniform without such a Help.

There are but few Comparisons of the first Kind in *Homer*, continues the Author; and instead of fixing the Mind upon the princi-

principal Object, by making it clearer, they frequently cast an Obscurity upon that Object, and even make the Readers lose the Sight of it, by a Heap of Circumstances that have no Affinity with it.

Some Persons of a rigid Exactness cannot approve the Use of Comparisons. They pretend, that Comparisons give no Light, because they are always very imperfect, and that it were much better to describe the Object in Question with the utmost Care, than to have recourse to lame Similitudes, which are only proper to create a Confusion. This is true, philosophically speaking, says Mr. de la Motte; but in Poetry nothing can be more false. It is not so much the Business of a Poet to give distinct Ideas, as to give lively Notions, though somewhat more confused. Comparisons well chosen produce that Effect. The Imagination does gladly take in two Objects at once: It is very willing to increase the imperfect Relations between them, and rests satisfied, provided it be not led astray too sensibly.

The Second Use of Comparisons consists in raising and enlivening the Mind. It must be confessed, says the Author, that *Homer* has been pretty successful in that respect: His Comparisons are generally noble and Graceful. The Majesty of the Gods, the Brightness of the Stars, the Violence of the Waves and Winds, the Eagerness of Hunters and Dogs, the Courage and Strength of Lions, the Watchfulness of Shepherds, the Traçableness and Fear of Sheep, are his usual Images, and the noblest and the most agreeable he could have chosen.

Homer has been censured for comparing *Ajax*, surrounded with Enemies, and leaving the Field of Battel against his Will, with an Ass driven from a Meadow by Children, who throw Stones at him, and yet eating the Grass as he is going away. Mr. de la Motte does not blame the Poet for making an Ass the Subject of his Comparison, because that Animal was perhaps as much esteemed in *Greece*, as it is despised by us. But he is a little offended with the Children, and the Gluttony of the Ass; for, says he, at all Times, and in all Countries, those Images are too mean to represent the obstinate Valour of *Ajax*, and the Fury of his Enemies.

As for the Variety arising from Comparisons, these two Rules may be laid down: First, To use as many different Images as

one can; Secondly, To insert them in the Narration, in such a manner that they be not too near one another, and that the Readers may not grow weary of them. If these Rules are judicious, *Homer* is guilty of two great Faults. He frequently brings the same Subject into his Comparisons, even three or four times in the same Page; as if being affected with a certain Object, his Imagination could afford him no other. He also heaps up too many Comparisons together: He has inserted five at the End of the Fifth Book, which tire the Reader, and break the Action of the Poem.

In the next place, our Author makes several Observations upon the Sentences. They have, says he, a double Effect in the Poem; they are an Ornament to it, and make it useful. When the Examples have affected the Imagination, the Sentences fix in the Mind the Impressions of the Examples, by short Precepts, which the Memory easily retains. Thus a skilful Poet does not fail to scatter them through his Work, and to bestow upon them all the Beauty and Brightness that they are capable of.

Sentences ought to be rightly placed, elegant, short, and of great Sense. They ought to be rightly placed, that is, they ought to be suited to the Actions and Events mentioned by the Poet; for if they do not appear grounded upon Experience, the Reader looks upon them as frivolous, and they can make no Impression upon him.

They ought also to be elegant, short, and of great Sense. Elegance renders them beautiful; Shortness gives them Strength; and a great Sense makes their Excellency. There are some Sentences in the *Iliad*, that have all those Qualifications. *Helenus* urges *Hector* to go back to *Troy*, and foretells him great Misfortunes, if he continues obstinately to remain without the Walls. *Hector* answers him, that the best Omen is to fight for one's Country. It would be difficult to find a more elegant, precise, and judicious Sentence. All the Maxims of the *Iliad* have not the same Beauty. Some are trivial, and others diffuse. Trivial Sentences displease the Reader, because they teach nothing; and those that are diffuse, must needs be tedious, because the Reader can add nothing to them. The Author proceeds to the Expression.

The Expression, says he, is much the same in Poetry, as Colouring in Painting. The

The Justness of the Composition, and the Exactness of the Design, are not sufficient in a Picture; it is also necessary, that Colouring should bestow upon the Objects all their Resemblance. In like manner, it is not enough for a Poem, that the Action be well imagined, that its different Parts be disposed in a proper Order, agreeably to good Sense and Nature; if the whole Work is not animated by the Expression, the other Beauties have hardly any Effect, and are almost lost. There never was a Work, made in order to please, that kept up its Reputation long, without a Beauty of Expression suitable to the Matter.

The Reason of it is, that the Expression is never indifferent: If it does not help the Thought, it proves prejudicial to it, and consequently if it does not please, it offends, or at least tires the Reader. There are no perfect synonymous Terms in any Language: A Word does not contain the Sense of another Word exactly, and in all its Circumstances; nay, every turn expresses a particular Manner of viewing a thing.

Mr. de la Motte infers from those Principles, that since the Work of *Homer* had a good Success in his own Time, and the following Ages, *Homer* must in general have been a great Master of his Language. But he denies, that the most Learned Men are able to judge of every particular Expression contained in the *Ilias*. No one understands dead Languages to such a Degree of Perfection, as to perceive all their Graces, Niceties or Negligences, and the happy or strained Licences of the Ancient Authors. Is there any Modern, though never so Learned, who can pretend to guess every thing that *Virgil* would have mended in his *Aeneis*, had he lived long enough to put the last Hand to it? And if no body is able to discover those Faults, and to judge of them, how can he fully perceive the happy Strokes, according to their Degree of Perfection, since he must be as nice in the Language, for the one as for the other?

'Tis certain, continues the Author, that there is no perfect Writer, as to the Expression, in any Language whatsoever. We may judge of it by our best *French* Performances. Is there any of them free from Faults? Above Twenty Faults have been found in the three first Pages of a Book generally esteemed for the Style. We are able

to discover those Faults; but if the *French* Language should die, and become a Learned Language, the most Learned Men would not perceive them, as we do now, the Beauties and Imperfections of those Passages, which afford at the same time something to be commended, and something to be blamed. The Author illustrates those Observations by some Examples well chosen; and concludes, that *Homer*, notwithstanding the Beauty of his Expression, may have committed many Faults in that Kind, of which we are not competent Judges.

Afterwards Mr. de la Motte examines the Morality of *Homer*, and undertakes to shew by several Passages, that he had wrong Notions about Ethicks.

What follows concerns the Personal Merits of *Homer*, and the Character of the *Ilias*. The Author is very careful to distinguish the Poet from his Work. We must judge of *Homer*, says he, by the Progress he made, considering the Ignorance of his Age; and we must judge of his Work, by the Beauties and Imperfections of it, considering the great Knowledge of our Time. According to those Principles, Mr. de la Motte gives us the following Character of *Homer*.

He had naturally a poetical Genius; he was a Lover of Fables and wonderful things, and inclined to imitate, either the Objects of Nature, or the Sentiments and Actions of Men. He had learned, (probably in his Travels) the Opinions, Customs, and Manners of Nations: Thus, being one of the most Learned Men of his Age, his Imagination afforded him the Art of putting together what he knew under the same Subject; and his Judgment made him sensible, that he should raise a greater Attention in his Hearers, by that common Dependence which the most different things would have upon the same Matter. He had a vast and fruitful Mind, more elevated than nice, more natural than ingenious, and more fond of Copiousness than of Choice. One would think, he described himself in the Person of *Nestor*; for, like that old Sage, he omits no Occasion of talking; he generally says more, than he should, and seems to be impatient of inserting all that he knows, and every thing that he has seen, as if he was afraid of losing any Part of it. He got by a Superiority of Taste the first Ideas of Eloquence in all the Kinds; he spoke the Language of all Passions, and opened

opened to the Writers who should come after him, a great many ways, which they were only to smooth. It is likely that *Homer*, whatever Time he had lived in, would have been the greatest Poet of his Country; and in this Sense only, he may be said to be the Master of those very Poets who surpassed him.

Mr. *de la Motte* has a very different Notion of the *Ilias*. That Work, says he, seems to me to be as far from Perfection, as the Author was qualified to attain to it, had he lived in a good Age. The *Ilias* is so full of the Imperfections of its Time, that none but those who read it with the greatest Attention, can perceive the Extent of the Poet's Wit. What concerns the Gods, is absurd; what concerns the Heroes, is frequently rustical and unpolite; the Notions of Morality are confused. 'Tis true, the Action of the Poem is great and pathetick; but it is drowned in the Number and Length of the Episodes. The different Kinds of Eloquence appear only like rough Draughts: The Descriptions, Narrations, Comparisons, Discourses, every thing offers Beauties and Imperfections together: There is hardly one Passage of that Justness and Choice, the Excellency whereof is known to us by a Succession of Precepts and Examples. How comes it then, continues the Author, that the Works of *Homer* are so highly esteemed to this very Day? Mr. *de la Motte* enquires into the Reasons of it. Here follows the Substance of what he says upon that Head.

When *Homer's Ilias* came out, his Contemporaries were pleased with it upon several Accounts. They admired the Extent and Boldness of his Design, his Descriptions and prodigious Fictions, the Beauty of his Expression, and the new Harmony of his Discourse. They had no Notion of a perfect Poem; and therefore they knew not how to distinguish an indifferent Performance of that Kind from an Excellent one. They could not be sensible of the Faults of the *Ilias*, because they had no Principles to judge of them. The Admiration of *Homer's* Contemporaries cannot be therefore a Proof of the real Merit of his Works.

In the following Ages, the same Ignorance, a Respect for Ancient Things, and the Disputes of several Cities, which pretended to have produced *Homer*, contributed very much to keep up his Credit. Besides, the

Ilias and *Odysses* served instead of History: They were the only Monuments of Antiquity; the Bounds of Countries were sometimes settled by the Passages of *Homer*, and his Verses became the universal Oracle of the Heathens.

The Works of that Poet being thus generally esteemed, all the *Greek* Writers, Poets, Historians, Orators, made it their chief Business to improve themselves by them; and the Encomiums which they bestow upon *Homer* and his Poems, ought to be looked upon as a mere Duty of Scholars to their common Master. The Philosophers were the first, who shook off the Yoke of Authority; but their Number was not considerable. 'Tis true, *Alexander* admired the *Ilias* to the highest Degree; but because he was a great Conqueror, it does not follow that he was a good Judge of Poetry. As for *Aristotle*, that Philosopher having, as he thought, found out an Art in the Poems of *Homer*, grew fond of his Discovery, and left nothing unattempted to justify it.

When the Works of that Poet came among the *Latins*, they were already supported by the Applauses of the *Greeks*; and therefore 'tis no wonder if they were received with Respect, and looked upon as a Model of Perfection. The Admiration of the *Greeks* and *Latins* for *Homer* had the same Influence upon the Moderns, ever since the Restoration of Learning. In short, according to Mr. *de la Motte*, *Homer* has been admired out of Prejudice, and Respect for Antiquity, and not out of Reason; and yet Reason is the only Standard, whereby we ought to judge of Things.

The Author proceeds to give an Account of his Translation of the *Ilias*. He begins with some Observations upon literal and elegant Versions; and then makes an Apology for the *French* Language against *Madam Dacier*. Afterwards he alledges several Reasons to prove against that Lady, that Poets do not cease to be Poets, when they are translated into Verse. Mr. *de la Motte* has endeavoured to make his Translation short, clear, and agreeable. He takes a great Latitude in his Version; for he has left out whole Books, altered the Disposition of Things, and even made several Additions.

He observes, that the Prolixity of the *French* Poems has been very prejudicial to them.

them. The *French* Poets thought it necessary to run as great a length as *Homer* and *Virgil*. Such an imprudent Emulation has produced the *Pucelle*, *Clouis*, *St. Louis*, &c. The Authors of those Poems would have confined themselves within narrower Bounds, if they had considered these two things. The first is, that *French* Verses require a great deal of Care, and must have nothing in them, that is strained or faint: Though they be never so difficult, the Reader expects that such a Difficulty should be overcome; and consequently it is a rash thing to take in too vast a Matter, whereby a Poet finds it impossible to display through the whole Poem all the Elegance, which the Verses require. Hence it is, that those long Poems are only well versified in some Places, and their Beauties mixed with many Negligences.

The Second thing, which should have induced the *French* Poets to contract their Works, is the uniform Cadence of the *French* Verses. That Cadence is pleasant for a time, but at last the Readers grow weary of it. Twelve thousand Verses, though never so excellent, would not appear so, if they were read all at once. A Poet must therefore contract his Poem, and divide it into shorter Books than the Ancients did, that he may keep up the Attention of his Reader, and make him relish *French* Verses. The *Lutrin* is now the only *French* Poem, that is read; and though it be elegant throughout, yet Mr. de la Motte believes, that its Brevity is one of those things which render it agreeable, since it contains only Six Books: the longest whereof does not consist of Three Hundred Verses.

These Reasons moved the Author to reduce the Twenty Four Books of the *Ilias* into Twelve, which are still shorter than those of *Homer*. If it be considered, says he, that the Repetitions of that Poet take up above the Sixth Part of the *Ilias*; that the Anatomical Account of Wounds, and the long Speeches of the Combatants take up a great deal more still, one may very well judge, that I could easily contract the Poem, without any Prejudice to the principal Action.

I shall omit some other Reasons alledged by the Author for abridging the *Ilias*; and in order to give a Specimen of his Poem, I shall pitch upon his Description of *Achilles's* Shield.

Dans la forge à l'instant s'enflament vingt
(fourneaux;
L'airain y devient souple, & sous les durs
(marteaux
Docile, il prend le tour que l'artisan lui donne:
En large bouclier d'abord il le façonne,
Et le ciseau léger y crée au même instant,
Des plus riches objets l'assemblage éclatant.
Au haut du bouclier se présente à la vue,
L'orgueilleux Pélion qui se perd dans la nue.
Là, brillent aux regards les nopces de Thétis;
Sur des nuages d'or les Dieux y sont assis;
Au front de Jupiter le plaisir se déploie;
La majesté pourtant regne encor dans sa joye.
Thétis est près de lui; son époux glorieux,
Peu touché de l'honneur d'être parmi les
(Dieux,

Ne regarde, ne voit que sa chère Immortelle,
Qu'une noble pudeur rendoit encor plus belle.
Au superbe festin tous les Dieux invitez,
Partageoient le bonheur des époux enchan-
tez;

De la table à l'envi ranimant l'allegresse,
Les saisons apportoit leur diversité richesse;
Mais malgré les plaisirs qu'il prend soin d'as-
(sembler,

Vulcain fait pressentir ce qu'il doit troubler:
La main de la Discorde entr'ouvrant un nuage,
Du desordre prochain fait briller le prestige:
Elle tient un fruit, où paroissent écrits
Ces mots: De la plus belle il doit être le prix.

On sçait quel fut le trouble entre les Im-
(mortelles;

Que toutes prétendoient à l'empire des belles;
Et qu'enfin Jupiter qui n'osa les juger,
Fit dépendre ce droit de l'arrêt d'un Berger.
Au bas du bouclier, poursuivant son ouvrage,
De cet événement Vulcain trace l'image.

Là, ce Berger aimable, issu du sang des
(Rois,

Juge les trois beautés soumises à son choix:
Son oeil s'est délié des grâces étrangères;
Et malgré la Pudeur, malgré ses loix sévères,
Elles ont dépouillé ces habits précieux,
Dont chacune vouloit imposer à ses yeux.
L'ouvrier cependant les distinguant sans peine,
Fait connoître Junon à sa grace hautaine;
Vénus, au souris tendre & sûr de ses appas;
Et la sage Minerve, à son chaste embarras.

Vénus reçoit la pomme, & l'ouvrier fidèle,
Maître de ces beautés que son ciseau décele,
Par des traits si touchants a su les imiter,
Qu'on voit bien que Paris ne pouvoit hésiter.

Dans les yeux de ce Juge est l'espoir du fa-
(laire.
Tu te repais, Paris, d'un bonheur adultère ;
Mais ce bien que déjà l'espoir te fait goûter,
Sçais-tu, Juge imprudent, ce qu'il te doit
(coûter ?

Plus loin, le bouclier, pour le dernier mi-
(racle,
De Sparte & de la Mer présente le spectacle :
La fugitive Hélène, & son époux nouveau,
Montoient impatients ce funeste vaisseau,
Qui bien-tôt après lui doit attirer à Troye
Tous ces mille vaisseaux dont elle fut la proie.

Par cet ouvrage ainsi Vulcain fait éclater
La grandeur du Héros qui le devoit porter :
De sa gloire prochaine il lui donne l'augure,
Et presse la vengeance en retraçant l'injure.
C'étoit peu pour Vulcain de surprendre les
(yeux ;
Le beau, s'il n'est utile, est indigne des Dieux.

Mr. de la Motte has had the Misfortune to
lose his Sight: The King of France has lately
given him a Pension.

II.

LETTRES choisies de Mr. BAYLE,
avec des Remarques. A Rotter-
dam, chez Fritsch & Böhm.
MDCCXIV.

That is, *SELECT LETTERS* writ-
ten by the late Mr. BAYLE, with
Remarks. Rotterdam. MDCCXIV.
Three Volumes in 120. pagg. 996. in
all. Besides a very large Index. Sold
by P. Vaillant in the Strand.

THESE Letters have been published by
a Person, who has taken care to
lay aside, not only those that were written
too carelessly, but also those that contained
nothing worthy of the Reader's Curiosity.
Besides, he has left out of all those that have
been printed, a considerable Quantity of
Compliments, Commissions, Thanks, and
many other things of that Nature; in a
word, whatever appeared to him of no Use

to instruct or please the Readers. The Edi-
tor observes, that Mr. Bayle has been very
profuse of Encomiums upon several Persons
mentioned in these Letters. Some of his
Praises, says he, are doubtless well grounded ;
but others ought to be looked upon as a mere
Civility, and a Kind of Acknowledgment
for the Favour which he received from some
Persons, who gave themselves the trouble to
furnish him with Memoirs, of which he
made a very good Use.

Mr. Bayle is so well known by several
Works, which have procured him a great
Reputation, that his Letters cannot but
raise the Curiosity of the Publick. They
run chiefly upon the *Historia Literaria*; and
because the Author writ at a Time when
most of the Books mentioned by him were
new, and known to every body, he is gene-
rally contented to take notice of them in a
few Words. The Editor, considering that
most of those Performances are not now so
well known, has thought fit to illustrate
Mr. Bayle's Letters with a great many Re-
marks, wherein he sets down the Titles of
Books, the Names of the Authors, the seve-
ral Editions, and sometimes gives an Histo-
rical Account, and a general Notion of the
Books. He has been so careful, and
so particular in these several Respects,
that his Notes will perhaps appear more use-
ful and instructive than the Letters them-
selves. They are a good Repertory for the
Historia Literaria from the Year 1673. to the
Year 1706. I must not forget to observe,
that these Letters are attended with a very
large and accurate Index made by the Edi-
tor. Such an Index will enable the Rea-
ders to find immediately any thing contain-
ed in this Work. This is the first Collection
of that Kind, that ever came out with so
good a Table. After what has been said, I
need only give a Specimen of Mr. Bayle's
Letters. Here follow some Passages extra-
cted out of them.

Mr. Bayle having said, in a Letter to Mr.
Minutoli of Geneva, that *Aristippus* took care
to teach his Daughter *Arete* Philosophy, in-
somuch that she kept School in his room af-
ter his Death, and that the *Grecians* were
amazed to see their young Men both *Scholars*
and *Lovers* of the same Person, adds :
" What a fine thing was it, Sir, to study at
" that Time! What a Pleasure to go through
" a Course of Philosophy under a charming
" Maid!"

“ Maid! If it be true, that Virtue is more
“ amiable, when it proceeds from a fine
“ Body,

“ *Gratior est pulchro veniens e corpore virtus;*

“ How much more agreeable is a Lecture,
“ that comes out of a fine Mouth? And can
“ you deny, that the Roughness of Precepts
“ would be softened, if they were spoken
“ by a *She-Professor*, whose Beauty we should
“ admire? Certainly, she would change the
“ Thorns of the School into Flowers:

“ *Quidquid calcaveris, hic rosa fiet.*

2. In a Letter from Rouen to the same.
“ Mr. Larroque * has his Mind so taken up
“ with the Books he is writing, that when
“ I give him a Visit, a full Hour is requisite
“ to bring him out of his Thoughts; and
“ then it being time to go away, I take my
“ leave of him, without discoursing of Po-
“ lite Learning.

3. In a Letter written to Mr. Le Clerc in the
Year 1684. “ I have heard a Hundred Peo-
ple blame the Author † of the *Journal des*
“ *Scavans*, because he never says any thing
“ of his own, and never gives his Judgment
“ about any Book. I endeavour to avoid in
“ my *Nouvelles*, what many People at Paris
“ find Fault with in that Journal.

4. “ In a Letter to Mr. Minutoli 1686.
“ You have seen in Mr. Jurieu’s *Accomplish-*
“ *ment of Prophecies*, that Father Simon has
“ had a Quarrel with him. Mr. Jurieu treats
“ him as he deserves; for, he is an impious
“ Man at the Bottom, who, to make his
“ Court to the Persecutors in France, falls
“ upon us like a mad Dog, in his last Book.
“ Dr. Allix should give him his due.

5. In a Letter to Mr. Marais, Advocate in
the Parliament of Paris, 1698. Mr. Bayle,
speaking of his Dictionary, says that he has
compiled a great many things in it, without

* An Eminent Divine of the Reformed Church
of France, known by several Learned Books.

† That Journal was then written by a single
Person.

being very much concerned for the Choice;
and then he compares those who read that
Dictionary to a *Caravanne*, that goes twenty
or thirty Leagues, without finding a Fruit-
tree, or a Spring. Mr. Bayle gives a very
right Notion of his Dictionary. A judici-
ous Abridgment of that Work would be
much more useful and entertaining than the
Original: I believe the Abridgment might
be reduced to the Third Part.

I shall occasionally take notice of a Mistake,
wherein I am concerned. The Editor
says in one of his Remarks, that I have tran-
slated Mr. Bayle’s Dictionary into English.
He has been misinformed: That Work was
translated by Ten or Twelve Persons.

6. In a Letter to Mr. Janiçon 1695. “ Have
“ you heard of a Book entitled, *The History*
“ *of the Anabaptists, containing their Doctrine,*
“ *the several Opinions whereby they are divided*
“ *into many Sects, the Troubles which they have*
“ *occasioned, and lastly, the most considerable*
“ *things that have happened upon their Account,*
“ *from the Year 1521. to this present time.*
“ *Amsterdam. 1700.* That Book con-
“ tains many curious Things, and such ex-
“ traordinary Events, and surprising Facts,
“ that the Reader cannot forbear being ama-
“ zed at them. It will afford Matter for
“ many Reflections upon the Folly of most
“ Men, and their Weakness in embracing
“ new Doctrines without any Examination,
“ and blindly taking up the most ridiculous
“ Visions, like so many essential Truths.
“ And indeed can any thing be more strange,
“ than to see the most extravagant Doctrine
“ all of a sudden received by a Multitude of
“ People, and preached by the meanest Sort
“ of Men, who impose upon others the
“ Chimerical Thoughts of a deluded Fancy,
“ as if they were true Revelations; who
“ form more ambitious Designs than those of
“ the most Famous Conquerors, and succeed
“ in a great measure? Is it not also an un-
“ accountable thing, to see such an incon-
“ siderable Man as Muntzer, the first Leader
“ of the Anabaptists, at the Head of a nu-
“ merous Army, filling all Germany with
“ Fear and Consternation; and after him a
“ Baker † and a Taylor ‡, who make them-

† John Matysen of Haerlem.

‡ John Bucold of Leyden.

" selves Masters of the City of *Munster*,
 " where they exercise the most Despotick
 " Power; especially the latter, who at
 " Twenty Six Years of Age was so crafty as
 " to make himself King, and so ambitious
 " as to pretend to reign over the whole
 " World? And yet this is Matter of Fact;
 " and the Readers will find in that Work
 " every Particular described in due Order.

" I have discoursed with some of the
 " most considerable Men of that Sect. They
 " acknowledge the Facts mentioned in that
 " Book; but they maintain, that they are
 " not the Offspring of those Anabaptists,
 " and that Baptism is the only Point, where-
 " in they agree with them. They look up-
 " on them as mad People, and abhor all
 " their Principles.

7. In a Letter to Mr. Minutoli 1691. " I
 " think I have already told you, that His
 " *Britannick* Majesty desired to have no En-
 " comium bestowed upon him by the Mi-
 " nisters who preach before him; the Pulpit
 " not being designed to praise Men, but
 " God. The King has been three times at
 " the *French* Church, and heard Mr. *Claude*
 " preach the first and second time, and the
 " third time Mr. *de Superville*, who is one
 " of the *French* Ministers Refugees and Pen-
 " sioners at *Rotterdam*. Those Gentlemen
 " have not spared the Incense; but they
 " made it smook indirectly, and in such a
 " manner as to be inoffensive to that great
 " Prince.

8. In a Letter to the same, 1691. " Mr. *Ju-
 " rieu* preached yesterday in the Afternoon
 " about the Affairs of *Europe*, and winded
 " the Prophetical Horn, with greater Em-
 " phasis, and more peremptorily than ever;
 " so that, as Men easily believe what they
 " wish for, our Refugees came from Church
 " full of Joy and Hopes, and almost per-
 " suaded of his Enthusiasms, whereby he
 " promised us a Victory. The most judi-
 " cious Persons do not approve, that he should
 " take upon himself to foretel things to
 " come, and discourse in the Pulpit of Po-
 " litical Matters, with so many Reflections
 " upon the News in the *Gazette*, some of
 " which are thought to be false; for Instance,
 " that the King of *France* has carried all the
 " Court Ladies along with him.— There
 " is no Country in the World, where the

" Magistrates are more displeased than they
 " are here (in *Holland*), when the Clergy
 " going out of their Sphere, meddle with
 " State-Affairs, and are always engaged in
 " some Controversy, or prosecuting some
 " body on Account of Heresy; which
 " breeds continual Animosities in private
 " Families, Consistories, and Synods.

9. In a Letter to the same, 1693. " Being
 " fond neither of Riches, nor of Honours,
 " I don't care for a Professor's Place*; and
 " if any one was offered to me, I would
 " not accept of it. I hate the Quarrels,
 " Animosities, and Cabals, that prevail in
 " all our Universities. *Canam mihi & Musis*".
 " I think I ought to observe upon this Occa-
 " sion, to the Honour of the Two Celebrated
 " Universities of *England*, that they are the
 " most peaceable Universities of all *Europe*.

Mr. *Bayle* was a Man of great Probity.
 " It is a great Mistake to fancy, that he was
 " not fully persuaded of the first Article of
 " Religion. He told me in a private Conver-
 " sation three or four Years before he died,
 " that it was impossible for the most subtil
 " Atheists to confute the Arguments ground-
 " ed upon the Contrivance and Wisdom con-
 " spicuous in the several Parts of the Universe.
 " Mr. *Bayle* was more Orthodox, than many
 " People fancy.

" I think I have still by me some of his
 " Letters, which I shall never publish, out of
 " Respect for his Memory, because he never
 " designed they should be made publick.
 " However, if they were very curious, and
 " such as might do him a great deal of Honour,
 " I should not scruple to print them. We
 " ought to do Justice to our Friends after their
 " Death, as well as when they are alive.

" I shall conclude with a Letter of Queen
 " *Christina* to Mr. *Bayle*.

Rome, December 14. 1686.

Mr. BAYLE,

" I Admit of your Excuses, and am willing
 " to shew you by this Letter, that I am sa-
 " tisfied with them. I am well pleased with

* Mr. *Bayle* had been for some Years Professor
 of Philosophy and History in the Illustrious
 School of *Rotterdam*.

the Zeal of the Person, who gave you Occasion to write to me; for I am extremely glad to know you. You express so great a Respect and Affection for me, that I forgive you with all my Heart: I would have you know, that I was only offended with that *Remainder of Protestantism*, of which you accused me. I am very tender upon that Point, because any Suspicion of that Nature is a Reflection upon my Glory, and the greatest Injury to me. Nay, I think it will not be amiss, if you inform the Publick of your Mistake and Repentance. This I expect from you, that you may deserve I should be altogether satisfied.

As for the Letter which you have sent me, it is doubtless my own; and since you say it is printed, you will do me a Kindness to send me some Copies of it. As I fear nothing in *France*, neither do I fear any thing at *Rome*. My Fortune, my Blood, and even my Life, are devoted to the Service of the Church; but I flatter no body, and will always speak the Truth. I am obliged to those who have published my Letter; for I do not dissemble my Sentiments. They are, Thanks be to God, too Noble and too worthy, to be disowned. However, it is not true, that this Letter was written to any of my Ministers. If I am envied, and have some Enemies, I have also Friends and Servants every where; and perhaps I have as many in *France*, in spite of the Court, as any where else. This is the plain Truth; and you may depend upon it.

But, you must not expect to come off so cheap. I will lay a Penance upon you; I mean, that for the Time to come you must send me all Sorts of Curious Books in *Latin*, *French*, *Spanish*, or *Italian*, and upon any Subject or Science whatsoever. I don't except Romances and Satyrs; but above all Chymical Books: I desire you to let me have them as soon as possible. I'll take care to repay you: 'Tis but sending me a Note. It will be the most acceptable and important Service you can do me. God keep you under his Protection.

CHRISTINA ALEXANDRA.

The Editor informs us, that some Persons did not approve that Mr. Bayle's Letters should be printed. The Letters of the most

Learned Men are not, generally speaking, very considerable. I would give several Reasons for it, were they not as well known to the Readers as to my self.

III.

A COMMENTARY upon the Prophet ISAIAH. By WILLIAM LOWTH, B. D. Prebendary of Winchester. London: Printed for W. Taylor, at the Ship in Pater-Noster-Row; and H. Clements, at the Half-Moon in St. Paul's Church-Yard. MDCCXIV. In 4to. pagg. 536.

WE have had Three Commentaries upon the Prophet *Isaiah* published within these few Years. The First was composed by Mr. *White*, the Second by Dr. *Vitringa*, of which I have lately given an Account †; and the Third is that of Mr. *Lowth*, which makes the Subject of this Article. Father *Calmet*, a *Paris-Benedictin*, will also publish a Commentary upon that Prophet; and every body knows that Mr. *Le Clerc* designs to do the same.

Mr. *Lowth* expresses his Thoughts about the Prophet *Isaiah* in the following Words. That Prophet, says he, "is certainly one
"of the most difficult of all the Prophets,
"though perhaps few are sensible of it, but
"they that try to explain him. Besides
"the Want of Ancient Records to clear up
"some Historical Passages of his Prophecy,
"a Difficulty common to him with the rest
"of the Prophets; there are some Difficul-
"ties, which do in a particular Manner at-
"tend his Writings. The Profoundness of
"his Thoughts, the Loftiness of his Ex-
"pressions, and the Extent of his Prophecy,
"made the Commentaries hitherto written up-
"on him, fall short of a full Explication of

† Above, pagg. 9, & seq. 17, & seq.

his Book; and he that will undertake to fathom the Depths of this Prophecy, is in great Danger of going out of his own.

In order to explain this Prophet, the Author has used the utmost Diligence to compare the Text with such parallel Places, both of the Old and New Testament, as might clear up its Sense: And he is willing to believe, that if he has given a new Light to the obscure and difficult Passages of *Isaiah*, it is chiefly by comparing the Phrase and Idiom of the Text with other parallel Places more exactly, than has been hitherto done by any Commentator that he has seen.

Mr. *Lowth* having described the Excellency of the Prophetical Writings, adds, that after all the Pains that hath been taken in clearing up the Sense of these Sacred Books, by Persons excellently qualified for such an Undertaking, still there is room left for further Endeavours in that Kind. For there is a Treasure of Heavenly Wisdom contained in them, that can never be exhausted. And as it is highly reasonable to believe, that some Parts of the *Old Testament Prophecies* reach to the End of the World; so it is as reasonable to expect, that in every Age Providence should open some new Scene, which will give further Insight into the Meaning of those Sacred Writings.

The Author declares, that he can by no means approve of the Opinion of some Learned Men, who are for cramping the Sense of the Prophets, and confining it within as narrow a Compass as they can, and will needs maintain, that the Prophets scarce foresaw any thing, but what was to come to pass in or near their own Time.

Mr. *Lowth* makes an Observation upon the Mystical Sense of the Prophecies, which deserves to be inserted here at length. The Christian Interpretation of the Prophecies, says he, is called the *Mystical Sense*, because it helps to unfold the Mysteries of the Gospel, not as if it were always opposed to a literal Sense. For, in many Cases, what we call the *Mystical Sense*, more easily answers the Natural and Genuine Import of the Words, than any other Interpretation that can be given of them. To instance in that Famous Prophecy, *Isa. VII. 14. Behold, a Virgin shall conceive, &c.* Supposing, but not granting, that this Prophecy can be applied in

a lower Sense to *Isaiah's* Son, or any other Person but *Christ*; yet it is plain at first Sight, that the Historical Sense, which is commonly given of the Words, to denote one that is now a Virgin, but should afterward marry and bear a Son, comes infinitely short of the true Force and Meaning of them, and contains nothing in it than can deserve to be called a Sign or Wonder. This seems to have been a Maxim in interpreting Prophecies, received among the Jews before *Christ's* Time, that wherever they observed an imperfect Completion of a Prophecy in the Historical Event, which no way answered the lofty Expressions and extensive Promises, which the natural Sense of the Text imported, there they supposed the Times of the *Messias* to be ultimately intended.

Mr. *Lowth* supposes all along in this Commentary, that many Prophecies are not limited to one single Event, but may have different Views, and be fulfilled by several Steps and Degrees: For which he alledges the following Reasons. First, This Opinion, as he has already observed, is agreeable to the Sentiments of the Jews. Secondly, Under the Old Testament, all the most considerable Persons and Transactions there mentioned, were Typical, and pre-figured the State of Things under the *Messias*. Thus, the New Testament informs us, that by *Sarah* and *Hagar* were allegorically represented the Two Covenants: By the preferring of *Jacob* before *Esau*, the Rejection of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles: By the Deliverance from the Egyptian Bondage, the Redemption of Mankind by *Christ*: That the *Israelites* passing through the Red Sea, did typify the Sacrament of Baptism; and their Sojourning in the Wilderness, in the Way to the Promised Land, was designed to signify, that we are but Strangers and Pilgrims in this World, and must look upon Heaven as the only true Place of Rest.

The Author mentions some other Types; and then observes, that several *Psalms* were written upon particular Occasions, relating to some remarkable Circumstances of *David's* Life, as it appears by their Titles, and by the general Subject handled in them: And yet several Passages out of those *Psalms* are applied in the New Testament to *Christ* and the Gospel, as more eminently fulfilled in them. From all which the Author infers, that

that there is a Resemblance or Correspondence between many of the Transactions mentioned in the Old Testament, and those which should come to pass under the New: And consequently that the Prophets, when they spoke of some Events near their own Times, probably had more distant Views, which might reach even to the latter Ages of the World.

Mr. Lowth makes some other Observations to the same Purpose, which I omit. What has been said is sufficient to understand the Nature of his Commentary. I shall therefore proceed to give a Specimen of it.

Chap. XXIV. 17. *Fear, and the Pit, and the Snare are upon thee, O Inhabitant of the Earth.*

"It seems to be a proverbial Expression, denoting divers Sorts of Calamities, some of which, if Men happened to escape, they should fall into others as bad: See *Jerem.* XLVIII. 43. As if a Man flying from his Enemy out of Fear, should fall into a Pit; and escaping from thence should be taken in a Snare. Compare *Amos* V. 15. The Three Hebrew Words, *Pachad*, *Pachath*, and *Pach*, are a *Paranomasia*, or have an Affinity in Sound with each other, which cannot be translated into another Language. Such Allusions are sometimes used by the Sacred Writers, (See Bishop *Sanderfon's* Sermon on *Ecclesi.* vii. 1. No. 3.) and are not disdained by the greatest Masters of Wit and Elegance. Witness that noted Passage between *Julian* the Apostate, and *St. Basil*. They were acquainted, as having studied together at *Athens*; and the former having read over a certain Treatise recommended by *St. Basil* to his Perusal, gave this Magisterial Censure of it, *Ἀέθρον, Ἐγρον, Κατήγρον*. To which that Eloquent Father returned this smart Repartee, *Ἀέθρον, ἔκ ἔθρον, εἰ γὰρ ἔθρον, ἔ κατήθρον*. See *St. Basil's Epist.* 207, 208. The Beauty of these Sentences cannot be translated into another Language.

Chap. XXXVIII. 8. *Behold, I will bring again the Shadow of the Degrees which is gone down on the Sun-dial of Ahaz Ten Degrees backward. So the Sun returned Ten Degrees, by which Degrees it was gone down, &c.*

So the Sun returned Ten Degrees.] "It is the common Opinion, that the Sun it self went back, but the Heavenly Bodies were restored again to their regular Position, as much being deducted from the next Night, as was added to this Day. But some think this a particular Miracle wrought by the Shadow's going back upon the Sun-Dial of *Ahaz*, and not taken notice of in other Countries, which occasioned an Embassy from *Babylon* to enquire about the Truth of it, 2 *Chron.* XXXII. 31.

By which Degrees it was gone down.] "These Ten Degrees are supposed to be Marks of so many Hours by which the Shadow went down, as the Text expresses it, both here and 2 *Kings* XX. 11. But there is no Need we should understand it of the declining Part of the Day, or the Afternoon; for the Word may be understood in general of a progressive Motion, and Bishop *Patrick* tells us from *Dr. Allix*, this Miracle was wrought about Ten a Clock in the Morning; nor can we be certain what Portion of Time is meant by these Degrees, for the Division of the Day into Hours seems not to have been so ancient an Invention: That is commonly ascribed to *Anaximander* or *Anaximenes*, who flourished about Two Hundred Years after, and probably learned it from the *Chaldeans*. To this purpose we may observe, that *Daniel* is the only Writer of the Old Testament, that mentions an Hour as a Division of Time, and there is no Hebrew Word that signifies such a Portion of Time.

Chap. XL. 3, 4. *The Voice of him that crieth in the Wilderness, Prepare ye the Way of the Lord, make straight in the Desert a High-way for our God. Every Valley shall be exalted, &c.*

"The first Intention of the Prophet in these two Verses is to declare, that God will remove all Impediments, which might hinder the Return of his People into their own Country: Compare Chap. LVII. 14. LXII. 10. To the same Purpose are several Expressions we meet with in the following Chapters, of God's opening Rivers in the Wilderness, of conducting his People by the Springs of Waters, making his Mountains a Plain, &c. See Chap. XLI. 18. XLIX. 10, 11. which Expressions allude to the Custom

" Custom of Princes to send Harbingers before them, to make the Roads easy and commodious for their Passage. The same Metaphor is used by Homer, *Iliad* 6, vers. 260. where Apollo promising to assist Hector, saith,

(*ἔνν*)
" 'Αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ προπάροιθε κείνῳ, ἵπποισι καλῶ-
" Πάσαν λειανέω." —

" I will go before, and make smooth all the Passages.

" But to this Exposition it must be added, that the very Letter of the Text does more

" exactly suit to the Office of John Baptist, who prepared the Way of the Lord, by preaching in the Wilderness.

The Publick will be very much indebted to the Learned Author of this Commentary, if he publishes all the other Prophets with his Observations upon them. We shall then have a compleat Commentary in English upon all the Old Testament, since we have already the *Pentateuch*, the *Historical Books*, &c. Commented or Paraphrased by the late Bishop Patrick.

L O N D O N.

THE Life of the Learned Mr. Dodwell, with an Abridgment of his Works, is actually in the Press. It will consist of about Forty Sheets in 8vo. That Life will doubtless afford an Extract very acceptable to the Readers.

I hope I shall quickly give an Account of a new Book published by Dr. Woodward.

P A R I S.

MR. de la Motte's Discourse upon Homer is looked upon by many People as an Excellent Piece, wherein the Author discovers a solid Judgment, and a great Skill in the Rules of *Epick Poetry*: But his *French Ilias* is not so generally esteemed. Many are of Opinion, that he does not so well succeed in *Heroick Poetry*, as in *Lyrick Verses*.

A Work ascribed to the late Mr. Simon has been lately published in Two Volumes in 12o. It is a Continuation of his *Bibliothèque Critique*.

Nouvelle Bibliothèque Choisie, où l'on fait connoître les bons Livres en divers genres de Littérature, & l'usage qu'on en doit faire. Paris. 1714.

Father Martene, *Benedictin* of the Congregation of *St. Maur*, is printing a Collection of Pieces never before published, taken

from the most Famous Libraries in Europe. That Collection will be entituled *Theſaurus Anecdotorum novus*, and consist of Five Volumes in *Folio*.

Dom Bernard de Montfaucon will shortly publish the First Volume of *St. Chrysostome*.

Mr. de la Monnoye, of the *French Academy*, is reprinting the *Menagiana* with considerable Additions and Corrections. This new Edition will be attended with several Dissertations relating to Literature; one of which runs upon the Famous Book, *de tribus Impossoribus*. The Author shews that there never was such a Book. There will be many other Curious Particulars in that Dissertation. The whole Work will consist of Four Volumes in 12o.

The same Gentleman is preparing for the Press a new Edition of the Old French Poets, that are most esteemed, such as *Villon*, *Coquilart*, &c. Those Poets will be reprinted from the best Editions, and illustrated with Critical and Historical Notes.

Madam Dacier's Translation of the *Odyssey* is ready for the Press. That Lady has revised and compared her *Terence* with the Manuscripts in the King's Library, and sent that Work into *Holland* to be reprinted there.

L O N D O N: Printed: And Sold by J. Roberts near the Oxford-Arms in Warwick-Lane. (Two Sheets, Price 6 d.)